

# Chapter I

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## Introduction



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## General Planning Process

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A city is a mixture of many lifestyles, beliefs, cultural values, attitudes, and needs. Even though we are all individuals, we depend on each other and are committed to living in a social environment. Every piece of land and every building in the community has a social and economic value; not just to the property owner or occupant, but to the community as a whole. The activities carried on in the structures and on the land form the complex of community life.

The physical surroundings and social environment of which all cities are made are the result, good or bad, of a multitude of individual and public decisions. Whether intentional or not, communities are inevitably “planned” by the consequences of such decisions. It takes many decisions to deal effectively with urban change. Decisions that guide and create desired changes must be deliberately made. If we fail to make decisions when they are needed, or when they have maximum effect, we lose the opportunity to develop a sound, efficient community.

The basic functions of planning may be summarized as follows:

1. to set community goals that reflect the expressed desires of citizens
2. to provide a means of anticipating and preparing for the future
3. to coordinate agencies and officials who relate to land use development
4. to help set priorities to assure wisest use of limited public funds and other resources
5. to establish sound policies for development
6. to provide a means of coordinating and educating
7. to obtain a legal basis for adoption of zoning and subdivision regulations by the initial adoption of a general plan

### THE GENERAL PLAN

The general plan is an official collection of the City Council's major policies concerning future physical development. The plan states the objectives in terms of goals, and policies to reach those goals, but does not specify the means of achieving them. The revision of the ordinances, capital budgets, etc. are the tools used to achieve them. It is not a colored map indicating what is to be done with each parcel of land, but an outline of goals and policies of what the citizens and government officials want for their community.

The plan looks at the city as a whole as well as the various planning areas within it. The citizens' reports for each planning community (e.g., Bell Canyon) and each element of the plan (e.g., housing, transportation, etc.) merge in the initial planning stages to present a general, but



comprehensive estimate of land use problems and requirements.

The steps to developing a general plan are:

1. citizen participation to establish goals and policies
2. data collection and analysis
3. development of a general plan comprised of policy statements and maps, e.g., transportation, etc.
4. implementation: set priorities, revise ordinances, develop a capital improvements program and budget, and educate the citizens as to what the plan includes and what it hopefully will accomplish

#### **CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT TO ESTABLISH GOALS AND POLICIES**

Many of the problems that exist in any community in the decision-making process are due to the kind of experience that citizens have had with elected and appointed officials. This experience influences local attitudes toward public actions, creates expectations and determines to what extent citizens are willing to participate in the planning process, etc. This view of government is complicated in Sandy because the city has grown so rapidly, and consequently the citizens have various views and have not yet established a strong city-wide identity. It is critical to the planning process and the stability of the community that efforts be made to lay the foundations for a strong citizen participation process.

Specifically, the citizen participation program seeks to accomplish the following:

1. It brings together viewpoints that might not otherwise be heard and gives each citizen the opportunity to broaden their perspective of the community
2. It ensures that the affected citizens and organizations are able to express their individual interest within the larger public decision-making process
3. It assists decision-makers in clarifying and resolving conflicting preferences among competing interests within the affected public--to help make value judgments and to encourage government to be more responsive to those it is intended to serve
4. It guides administrative decisions in directions that are consistent within the policy preferences and priorities of the affected public



The goals and policies developed by the citizens set the entire character and direction of the plan.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In order to gain a broad view and insight into the community and to analyze the feasibility of citizens' goals and policies, data regarding current conditions must be gathered and analyzed. This gives decision-makers an idea of why Sandy exists and a basis upon which estimates of future demands can be made.

The data is gathered in the various areas of population growth and characteristics, economic base and activities, natural features and land uses, public facilities (e.g., major thoroughfares, mass transit, etc.), and housing.

## IMPLEMENTATION: ZONING AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND BUDGET

The means by which a plan is put into effect include zoning and subdivision controls, and capital programs and budgets. Zoning is the most common and is essentially a means of insuring that the land uses are compatible with one another, and that adequate space for each type of development is provided. It controls densities and can direct new growth into appropriate areas. Subdivision regulations are locally adopted laws, authorized by state law, governing the process of converting raw land into building sites. Because developers' actions make major, usually irreversible, impacts on the citizens, subdivision regulations are particularly important in making a community plan work.

Capital improvement programs and capital budgets are prerequisites to sound planning in any community. The capital improvement program lists the improvements required in the community and establishes a priority for their construction. The capital improvement program is designed for a period of years (normally five years) and is prepared anew each year as a re-evaluation of community needs takes place. The capital budget is designed to allocate funds for the right project at the right time.



## Public Attitudes Toward Land

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Land use, zoning, subdivision, conflict—all these go hand in hand. How easy it would be if conflict could be deleted from the developmental process. It can, to some degree, by making sure that planning commissions and city councils put their policies in writing and adhere to them consistently. But conflict is inevitable in the use of land, because of the various attitudes that have developed as to what land is. The following is a brief outline of how the concepts of land have evolved through America's history and how these concepts relate to the general plans.

Before the American Revolution, the concept of *stewardship* existed, i.e., land belonged to the mother country and the early settlers were merely “stewards.” Charters from the crown were required for establishment and development of the colonies and outlined the government organization and “plans” for the community. Early plans provided land for parks, schools, streets, and other community necessities (e.g., Annapolis, Williamsburg etc.). Because agriculture was the economic base of the colonies, town plans often included areas outside built-up areas so that both rural and urban land uses were subject to integrated control. Fairly sophisticated concepts of collective ownership and commercial land management guided development.

After the Revolution, new concepts of land developed. Because protection was the highest priority during this period, land development outside the cities was encouraged as a warning system against attack. To encourage outward expansion, Congress passed the Land Ordinance Act of 1785 and the Homestead Act of 1862. Basically, these acts allowed government land to be sold to individuals at very low prices. Because of the distance between homesteads and towns, and because of the philosophy of *laissez-faire* that was predominate nationally, the individual was left to his own resources to develop the land. Together, these developments generated a new concept: land as a *constitutional or individual right* to be used in whatever manner the individual desires. This “prairie psychology,” as some refer to it, is still with us even though the “prairies” are few.

The two acts passed by Congress in 1785 and 1862 also led to a great deal of land speculation. Because government land was so cheap, investors bought it and held it until the area supply of land diminished. Land began to be seen as a *commodity*. The resultant boom or bust situation was to be a dominant force in the nineteenth century, and the “invisible hand” of the market dominated growth.



By 1850, many public officials saw a need to curb the views of individual right and land as a commodity. The cities had become centers of pestilence and grave concern over the health and environment of children arose. To alleviate some of the problems, governments reverted to the English nuisance laws to control the hazards created by some land users. Soon the concept of individual right was modified to include “as long as it does not interfere with the *health, safety and welfare of others.*”

The late 1890's saw new developments aimed at getting away from the negative aspects of nuisance controls. The conservation movement spurred on by Teddy Roosevelt and others ushered in the concept of land as a *limited resource* to be used wisely. It was the first recognition of man's destructive capabilities, and it established the roots of the present environmental movement.

Another effort of the 1890's was the “City Beautiful” movement. Spawned by the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, it emphasized monumental civic structures that could accommodate change and growth. It sought to alleviate the darkness of the urban environment primarily by creating parks and open spaces, widening streets, erecting classical edifices and constructing thoroughfares. It presented a sharp contrast between the cities as they were and what they might become. The “City Beautiful” movement was the renaissance of urban planning. It brought back many of the ideas and commitments of early colonists and established planning as a staff function of local government.

The English nuisance laws were developed for a rural society. It was quickly realized that new regulations must be adopted to clean up the cities. New York City introduced “zoning regulations” in 1916. State enabling legislation, giving cities specific authority to zone, became common during the 1920's. The state actions were substantially aided by the Federal Government when the Department of Commerce issued the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act in 1924. The constitutional doubt concerning the concept of zoning was settled in 1926 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld zoning in Village of Euclid vs. Ambler Realty Company.

The civil rights movement of the 1960's with its stress on quality living, produced yet another concept for land - *consumer protection*. This idea probably is the biggest bugaboo for government for no one can discern the fine line between consumer protection and individual responsibility. We need government, but how much? Are we overregulated?



These often conflicting views of land lead to constant controversy and attempts to resolve the issues that arise. On the one side, a person usually has the individual's right to do with the land what he or she chooses and land as a commodity to be bought and sold for profit. On the other side of the controversy there are the concepts of: general health, safety and welfare; land as a limited resource; city as a desirable place to live; additional environmental concerns; and consumer protection. Each of us shares these views. Which view will prevail at any point in time or with each proposal depends on what role we are assuming (e.g., head of household, developer, planning commission member, etc.). Each of these views is individually important and the several views may not be in conflict.

But all too often these views clash no matter who sits on the city council and planning commission or who is the developer or planner. *Conflict in planning is inevitable.* This tension is inescapable and often serves as a creative force, stimulating communication, change and better performance. Even though we all would like harmony, it is not always possible in local government. In fact, our whole political system is based upon opposing viewpoints because of “vested interests.” Through this process, the issues are defined and solutions reached.

However, sometimes this conflict distorts the view of what planning is, especially when a general plan is being developed. The general plan is just that--a plan, a guide to decision-making. It is a process that begins with the evaluation of existing data and with the citizens' participation to establish goals and policies for their community. The plan reviews what development will be like over the next twenty years, but in reality the plan must be updated every 5-6 years in order to reflect the changes in the community as to the desires of the residents.

The plan states the ends, but does not specify the means of achieving them (the revision of the ordinances, capital budgets, etc. are the tools of implementation). It does not indicate a diagram of what is to be done with any parcel. It does not include schedules, priorities or cost estimates. It is not a report that planners draw up, print, bind and then lay in front of the planning commission and city council. What the plan is, is an outline of goals and policies of what the citizens and government officials want for their community.



## The Purpose of the Data Document

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The Sandy City Planning Office has assembled this data document to aid city officials, citizens, and the planners in their roles in the decision-making process. Its primary purposes are:

1. to catch Sandy City at a particular point in time so that later comparisons can be made. Much of planning is based on data showing how a city changes over time and trends that have developed.
2. to put much of the data already available from other sources together to see how the various elements of land use planning relate and interact.
3. as a result of 1 and 2, to site the problems and issues for discussion to give direction for policy development.

This data document looks at five basic areas of planning: (a) growth, community identity, and land use; (b) housing; (c) commercial/industrial; (d) transportation; (e) public facilities; e.g., health services, schools, fire and police protection; and (f) parks, recreation, trails, etc.

Of major concern in the development of a general plan is to provide for the maximization of individual choice, the promotion of a strong community identity, the improvement of governmental responsiveness to citizen needs, the preservation and revitalization of the original Sandy area, the promotion of a greater balance of housing, the protection of the natural environment, and the development of effective transportation and park systems. These concerns are evident in the four citizens' reports included in this document.

Each section of the data document attempts to outline the basic problems evident from the analysis of data regarding Sandy, to list the financial resources available to deal with these problems, and to suggest what implications these have on policies for the city's general plan.